**DRM Exchange Number 2**

**DRM Now Provides Vaccination Advocacy**
*Your right to vaccine access*

Do you need help getting vaccinated? Disability Rights Michigan now offers free vaccine advocacy to individuals with disabilities who want a vaccine but cannot get one. The Vaccine Advocacy team is working to improve access to vaccines by addressing harmful stereotypes and accessibility gaps that confront individuals with disabilities.

Launched in October 2021, the team is comprised of 8 DRM employees, including advocates from across the state. The team provides direct advocacy, information, training, and outreach to help people with disabilities, family members, and caregivers get vaccinated. This service is grant funded (state and federal) through June 2024.

“DRM has always been client focused, and the goal of the Vaccine Advocacy Team is no different,” said Mark McWilliams, Director of Vaccine Advocacy. “The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in gaining access to the community supports they want and need. We are dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities get that access.”

Advocates have attended vaccine clinics, targeted efforts in underserved areas, created a series of COVID-FAQs, presented to statewide agencies on disability rights, and have partnered with other advocacy organizations to increase vaccine access. As outreach efforts continue to expand, advocates will implement new strategies and build new partnerships to meet the unique needs of Michigan residents.

**Our Vaccine Services**
Call and speak with an advocate or contact us through our website

* Get direct advocacy assistance
* Get your vaccine questions answered
* Learn about your rights
* We listen and offer guidance, advice, and suggestions
* Our advocates provide information and referral resources

Our services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

Visit our website to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine and how we can help: [www.drmich.org/vaccineadvocacy](http://www.drmich.org/vaccineadvocacy)

**DRM Secures Employment Settlement**

Hannah, an employee with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), contacted Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) in January 2020. MRS is a division of the State of Michigan tasked with providing specialized employment and education-related services for people with disabilities. Hannah contacted DRM because she requested a reasonable accommodation to telework four hours per week to manage her back pain, and MRS denied the request. DRM encouraged her to file a complaint with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC found reasonable cause to believe MRS discriminated against Hannah by denying her accommodation request, and suggested MRS pay Hannah and provide the accommodation to resolve the claim. MRS refused.

In December of 2020, DRM, with NachtLaw P.C. as co-counsel, filed a federal complaint on Hannah’s behalf. The complaint alleged disability discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act based on MRS’ failure to provide Hannah with her requested reasonable accommodation. She sought monetary damages for missed work and pain and suffering, as well as injunctive relief, including training for MRS’ employees on reasonable accommodations. In November of 2021, Hannah and the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) settled the lawsuit, with MDHHS agreeing to pay Hannah an undisclosed amount.

Hannah left MRS in August of 2020 to pursue her law degree at the University of Wisconsin, and is in her second year there.

**The Disability Community Covid-19 Vaccine Survey**

Our Vaccine Advocacy team is conducting a survey on COVID-19 vaccinations and is seeking input from the disability community. We want to hear from you.

You can take the survey if you are:

1. An adult with a disability (over the age of 18), or

 2. A caregiver/family member of an individual with a disability

Your opinion matters to us – whether you have had the COVID-19 vaccine or not.

**Your responses will be kept private, and the information will only be shared in a group format.**

You can take the survey until 3/31/22.

We value your feedback.

SURVEY LINK: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/DisabilityCommunityVaccineSurvey](www.surveymonkey.com/r/DisabilityCommunityVaccineSurvey%20) or call for a paper copy at 1.800.288.5923

**Where Can I Find Help Obtaining an Adaptive Vehicle or making my Vehicle Accessible?**

Having an adaptive vehicle can be critical for individuals with disabilities and many have known the struggle to find reliable and affordable accommodations. The ability to drive safely and comfortably is important when maintaining the freedom to travel.

* Vehicle modifications can involve:
* Mechanical hand controls;
* A left foot accelerator;
* Reduced effort brakes and steering systems;
* Power transfer seats; and
* Lifts and ramps.

DRM has included adaptive vehicles on our Resources page and offer information on vehicle modifications, paying for modifications, and federal programs. Visit our website to learn more [(https://www.drmich.org/resources/accessibility/)](%28https%3A/www.drmich.org/resources/accessibility/%29)

**DRM is now on Instagram**We are excited to announce the debut of Disability Rights Michigan’s new Instagram page! Follow DRM to learn more about who we are, what we do, and how we advocate for the rights of people with disabilities in Michigan. @disabilityrightsmichigan

**Advocacy Partner Highlight
*Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MI-DDI)***

* **Listen to MI-DDI's New Podcast Series: Possibilities**
Michigan Developmental Disabilities' (MI-DDI) Possibilities Podcast Series examines issues that affect people with disabilities and their support systems. The topic for Episode 2 is Medication Management. Managing medications is not always easy. In this episode, Clinical Pharmacist Dr. Steven Erickson talks about how to make the process efficient and safe for people with disabilities and their caregivers. Link: <https://ddi.wayne.edu/possibilitiespodcast/medication-management>